

REMARKS

The present Amendment cancels dependent claims 7 and 8 and transfers their subject matter to independent claim 4. The Amendment also corrects an oversight in independent claim 1, and revises claim 1 and independent claim 3 to further distinguish the invention from the cited references.

Section 9 of the Office Action rejects independent claims 1 and 3 for obviousness on the basis of Masatake in view of Hirai and Satoru. However, it is respectfully submitted that Satoru is inappropriately combined with the Masatake and Hirai references. The reason is that an ordinarily skilled person who wanted to improve some aspect of an arrangement which averages an input signal in order to smooth a response would probably conclude that this objective would be compromised by briefly amplifying the input signal when it changes, as in Satoru. An ordinarily skilled person would therefore be unlikely to select Satoru as a reference that might provide hints for improving what is taught by Masatake or Hirai.

Furthermore, claim 1 now recites that a computation means "momentarily causes a predetermined maximum current corresponding to a threshold current" flowing through a solenoid "when operation from the neutral position is detected to start." The Satoru reference temporarily boosts the current whenever there is a change in the signal from Satoru's joystick, not just when operation from the neutral position is detected. More importantly, Satoru neither discloses nor suggests boosting the current to the "predetermined maximum current" of claim 1. Instead, the magnitude of Satoru's boost is related to the signal from Satoru's joystick (see, for example, the last full sentence on page 4 of the English translation). Even if the Satoru reference were properly combined

with the Masatake and Hirai references, despite the above argument to the contrary, it is respectfully submitted that Satoru would not have led an ordinarily skilled person to modify Masatake or Hirai so as to cause momentary increase to a "predetermined maximum current" as recited in claim 1.

Independent claim 3 provides that a computation means increases an output computation value "to an effective maximum value corresponding to a threshold current value" flowing through a solenoid "and momentarily causes a predetermined maximum current when operation from the neutral position starts." It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 4 is patentable over the references for reasons along the lines discussed above with respect to claim 1.

Section 7 of the Office Action rejects independent claim 4 for anticipation by Hirai, but claim 4 has been amended to include the subject matter previously present in claims 7 and 8 (now cancelled). Claims 7 and 8 were rejected for obviousness (in sections 9 and 10 of the Office Action) based on Masatake, Hirai, and Satoru. For the reasons discussed below, though, it is respectfully submitted that the invention now defined by independent claim 4 is patentable over these references.

It is again respectfully submitted that an ordinarily skilled person would be unlikely to combine the teachings of the Satoru reference with either Masatake or Hirai because the ordinarily skilled person would probably conclude that Hirai's momentary boost would sacrifice the objectives sought by averaging the input signal.

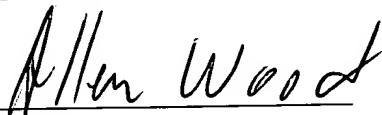
Furthermore, claim 4 recites "means, **responsive to the drive current**, for detecting when the input arrangement is displaced from a neutral position" (emphasis supplied). In contrast, Satoru's output booster 19 and shift state detector 20 (see Figure 1 of the reference) appear to be responsive directly to signals from Satoru's joystick, and **not** to a drive current that is supplied to a proportional solenoid valve in accordance with claim 4.

Claim 4 also provides that the drive current "is temporarily increased to a predetermined maximum value ...", while Satoru teaches a boost that is related in magnitude to the input signal.

Since claims 5 and 6 depend from claim 4 and recite additional limitations to further define the invention, they are patentable along with claim 4 and need not be further discussed.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Wood". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font. The first name "Allen" is written with a large, looped 'A' and the last name "Wood" is written with a large, looped 'W'.

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AMENDMENT

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